

**“The dream and aspirations of teaching”:  
English teachers’ perspectives on sustaining the motivation to teach**

## **Introduction**

For teachers of secondary school English, the most consistently reported motivations for choosing to teach are intrinsic and altruistic and include: a passion for the subject; a love of literature; a desire to ‘make a difference’; working with young people; and the pursuit of a dream, vocation or calling (Bullough & Hall-Kenyon, 2011; Dutton, 2017; Goodwyn, 2004, 2012; Hansen, 1995; Manuel & Brindley, 2005; O’Sullivan, 2007). When aspiring secondary English teachers speak of their motivations, their discourse is characteristically inflected with allusions to the affective dimensions of human experience such as ‘passion’, ‘love’, ‘desire’, ‘dreams’ and their imagined identity and agency as a teacher (see Brock, 1996; Dutton, 2017; Goodwyn, 2004, 2012; O’Sullivan, 2007, 2016). As one prospective teacher put it, “I have decided to become an English teacher because I love English and I love working with people, so I can’t imagine a better profession” (Dutton, 2017, p. 45).

For many, the initial motivation to teach is inextricably bound up with their values, beliefs and subjectivities (see Bullough & Hall-Kenyon, 2011; Day, 2017; Goodwyn, 2012; Hong, 2010; Kelchtermans, 2009; O’Sullivan, 2007, 2016; Yee, 1990), underscoring Palmer’s (1998) notion that we are drawn to teach a certain subject because “it sheds light on our identity as well as on the world” (p. 25). While the initial motivation to teach “emerges from one’s inwardness” (p. 2), this original motivation does not necessarily remain immutable over the span of a teaching career.

Just as a teacher’s professional identity is complex, dynamic and evolving (Kelchtermans, 2009; Kelchtermans & Vandenberghe, 1994), so is a teacher’s motivation subject to the influence of personal, organisational and other contextual variables experienced during the course of a career (see Borman & Dowling, 2008; Day, 2012; Glazer, 2018; Gore, Holmes, Smith & Fray, 2016; Hellsten & Prytula, 2011; Lindqvist & Nordanger, 2016; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011, 2017). As Guerriero (2015) argues, a teacher’s level of motivation at any point throughout their working life has far-reaching implications for their “wellbeing, intention to persist in teaching, and ultimately teachers’ professional success” (p. 7). The nature of teachers’ initial motivation, however, is seen to be “substantially influential in the subsequent development of students and, eventually, when they become teachers” (Heinz, 2015, p. 259). In fact, Heinz (2015) has

proposed that “the factors that attract individuals to teaching ... may, in turn, influence how long they may remain in their teaching role” (p. 2).

For these reasons, teacher motivation continues to be a focal point in studies concerned with teacher professional identity development, effectiveness and resilience (Day et al., 2006; Day, 2017) and patterns of teacher recruitment, retention and attrition evident in many countries around the world (Craig, 2017; Day, 2017; Glazer, 2018; Gore et al., 2016; Guarino, Santibanez & Daley, 2006; Ingersoll, 2001; Lindqvist & Nordanger, 2016; Mason & Matas, 2015; OECD, 2005, 2018; Serow, 1994; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011, 2017; Gallant & Riley, 2014, 2017). For many decades, considerable attention has been appropriately directed to understanding the motivations that attract individuals to teaching and the role of these motivations in mediating the pre-service and early-career stages (Gore et al., 2016; Mansfield et al., 2012; Sinclair, 2008).

This attention has been expanded in recent research through heightened interest in the association between the durability of initial motivation and a teacher’s commitment and effectiveness – not only in the pre-service and early years but across the “professional life phases” (Day et al., 2006, p. vi). In relation to questions of teacher retention and attrition, Schaefer, Long and Clandinin (2012) propose that the decision to leave the profession is not necessarily a sudden phenomenon: rather it can be understood as the culmination of a sometimes protracted process of managing the tensions that arise between a teacher’s professional identity and the contextual forces that may challenge and disrupt this.

Our purpose in this paper is to shed further light on in-service teachers’ motivation. We report here on the relevant findings of a study with a group of Australian secondary school English teachers across the spectrum of “professional life phases” (Day et al., 2006, p. vi). As part of a larger study, we sought to gather teachers’ perspectives on questions pertaining to the continued strength and relevance of their initial motivations; the factors and conditions that may nourish or put at risk these motivations; and any perceived links between self-reported levels of motivation and a teacher’s intentions for remaining in the profession.

Initially, the paper situates the study through a discussion of the relevant international and Australian research literature on teacher motivation, with an emphasis on qualitative studies and studies with secondary English teachers in particular. It then addresses the aim, purpose, research design, methodology and theoretical and conceptual framework informing the study. The methods of data collection and analysis are explained, with a descriptive overview of the sample and participants. The remainder of the paper explores the results. We conclude with a

synthesis of the findings and recommendations for addressing a number of key matters and implications arising from these.

An explicit goal of this study has been to represent the views and voices of teachers themselves. Although it was more than 30 years ago that Goodson (1991) advocated for the need to “know more about teachers’ lives” and to “assure that the teacher’s ‘voice’ is heard, heard loudly, heard articulately” (p. 36), teachers’ voices continue to be peripheral in the literature on motivation. If the most salient influence on the learning and achievement of students is the teacher (OECD, 2018), then it is necessary to more fully understand the factors that motivate them to “teach to their best and well” (Day, 2017, p. xiii).

### **Research on teacher motivation**

In a recent review of the research literature in the field, Guerriero (2015) makes a case that “from the perspective of educational policy, teacher motivation is not only a means towards improving educational outcomes but is also in and of itself a valuable education outcome” (p. 7). Teacher motivation is directly implicated in teachers’ professional and psychological wellbeing and job satisfaction; decision-making and instructional practices; willingness to engage in professional development; and in students’ motivation and performance (p. 7).

In this sense, teacher motivation – understood as the energy, desire and intent that drives behaviour and actions – functions as a mainstay of professional identity, shaping a teacher’s decision-making, effectiveness, satisfaction and commitment (Day et al., 2006; Hellsten & Prytula, 2011; Kitching, Morgan & O’Leary, 2009; Day, 2012; Guerriero, 2015; Day & Gu, 2010, 2014; Gu & Day, 2007, 2013; Heinz, 2015; Kelchtermans, 2009; Nias, 1989; Yee, 1990). Motivation is not only about the reasons why individuals choose to teach: it also plays a crucial role in how long and with what degree of intensity they pursue their goals (Day et al., 2006).

Research in the field has sought to further understand both the nature and the implications of teacher motivation by investigating: the factors influencing the initial motivation to teach; associations between teacher motivation and teacher effectiveness; the relationship between teacher motivation, student motivation and student learning; the socio-cultural and other contextual forces that shape motivation; and the influence of motivation on teachers’ affective orientation to their work (Gore et al., 2016; Guerriero, 2015).

In each of these strands of research there has been a predominance of large-scale quantitative studies utilising survey and questionnaire instruments to capture patterns and trends in self-reported motivation, mostly with samples of prospective, pre-service and early-career teachers (Gore et al., 2016). The studies generally adapt one or more constructs of teacher motivation, including constructs based on theories of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997, 2006; OECD, 2014; Vieluf, Kaplan, Klieme, & Bayer, 2012); expectancy and values (Richardson & Watt, 2006, 2014; Watt & Richardson, 2008); achievement and goals (Butler, 2007); and self-determination (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

In a review of the literature published between 2005 and 2015, Gore et al. (2016) observe that much of this recent quantitative research has been based on the Factors Influencing Teaching Choice (FIT-Choice) survey (Richardson & Watt, 2006, 2014) “which includes a specific set of pre-defined motivational influences that survey respondents rank” (p. 29). While these studies provide extensive evidence of the reasons why individuals choose to *enter* teaching, it is necessary to extend this research focus to the relationship between initial motivations and subsequent career outcomes.

Other studies, including the present study, have examined teacher motivation within social-constructivist traditions of research (Day et al., 2006, Day, 2012; Kitching, Morgan & O’Leary, 2009; Pillen, Beijaard & den Brok, 2013; Schaefer, 2013; Shaefer, Long & Clandinin, 2012). A number of these studies have explored the role of motivation by theorising it as inseparable from teacher identity and therefore susceptible to the effects of multifarious, protean and nuanced personal and contextual factors over the span of a teacher’s career. Qualitative studies in this vein are often concerned with representing individual teacher’s perspectives, recognising the heterogenous nature of lived experiences of the self-in-context (Mason & Matas, 2015) and human emotion as “an important source of influence” (Seo, Barrett & Bartunek, 2004, p. 424) on motivation.

In their study with 300 primary and secondary school teachers in England, for example, Day et al. (2006) explored the influences on teachers’ work and lives, including influences on their motivation. In this longitudinal inquiry, reported in *Variations in Teachers’ Work, Lives and Effectiveness* (VITAE) (Day et al., 2006), the influences on teachers’ work and effectiveness was theorised in terms of the interactions of three dimensions of teachers’ professional identity as it is shaped by “combinations of factors embedded in the individual, relational and organisational conditions in which they work and live” (Gu & Day, 2013, p. 29). The study found that professional identity was “a composite of the interaction in different work scenarios between

socio-cultural/policy, workplace, and personal dimensions and that it was not always stable or positive” (Day, 2012, p. 15).

In an earlier study of the factors and the conditions that impact teachers’ initial and ensuing career decisions, Yee (1990) identified two broad categories of “good-fit” and “weak-fit” teachers based on their initial motivations. “Good-fit” teachers were those who chose to teach for mainly intrinsic and altruistic reasons, including a sense of vocation or calling, and tended to remain committed as “good-fit stayers” if workplace conditions continued to nourish their initial motivations. When conditions or other forces challenged these motivations, the “good-fit” teacher was susceptible to becoming a “a good-fit undecided” or a “good-fit leaver”. In contrast, those who entered teaching for mainly extrinsic reasons or as a fall-back or temporary career were more prone to attrition. This category of “weak-fit” teachers could become either “weak-fit leavers” or “weak-fit stayers” (Yee, 1990, p. 90) depending on the extent to which the extrinsic rewards of teaching and, for the latter, collegial support, were apparent. Yee’s emergent typology of “good-fit” and “weak-fit” teachers was developed in large part from interviews with 44 then current and 15 former American secondary school teachers.

In their thematic content analysis of Australian research on the predictors of teacher attrition and retention, Mason and Matas (2015) note that “eliciting the perspectives of current teachers, former teachers, or both” (p. 49) is a common method of investigating teachers’ commitment and career intentions. They also draw attention to the scarcity of “discipline-specific” (p. 51) studies designed to account for the potential variations in teachers’ perspectives that may be attributable to the distinctive disciplinary, pedagogical, socio-political and historical facets of a particular curriculum subject area.

### ***Research on secondary English teacher motivation***

Historically, relatively few studies have explored the motivation and career decisions of secondary English teachers. Of these, a majority have been concerned with understanding the initial motivations for choosing to teach and are typically undertaken with pre-service teachers prior to, at the commencement of an Initial Teacher Education (ITE) program, or soon thereafter (Goodwyn, 2004, 2012; Manuel & Brindley, 2005; Manuel & Carter, 2016). Because of the ‘moment-in-time’ nature of this research focus, it precludes attention to questions of ‘if, how and why’ initial motivations shift over time as a consequence of, for instance, the ITE program and early and longer-term career experience. Nevertheless, these research studies have

contributed consistent evidence of the primacy of intrinsic and altruistic motivations for those attracted to teach secondary English.

Goodwyn's (2012) studies with successive cohorts of pre-service English teachers in England, for instance, report the top-ranked motivations as:

1. Love of /enthusiasm for/passion for the subject
2. Working with young people
3. Love of literature/reading
4. Being good at the subject (p. 219).

Similarly, a comparative study with pre-service English teachers in Australia and England (Manuel & Brindley, 2005) found that the most frequently cited reasons for choosing to teach were:

1. Personal fulfilment /fulfilment of a dream
2. Enjoyment/love of/passion for English/literature
3. Working with young people
4. Desire to contribute to society (p. 42).

Immediately noticeable is the strong convergence of intrinsic and altruistic motivations of pre-service English teachers not only from different geographical contexts but also from two distinct time periods, with Goodwyn's findings echoing those of Manuel and Brindley (2005) a decade earlier. Equally prominent are motivations that can be understood as "discipline-specific": there is explicit reference to the distinctive features of English as a subject, and in particular to a "love of literature", reflecting the significance of the affective dimensions of identity and personal biography in the decision to teach.

A more recent study with pre-service secondary English teachers in Australia builds on the existing research into initial motivation by closely examining PSTs' professional identity development, levels of motivation, and strength of commitment to teaching over the course of a graduate-entry ITE program (Dutton, 2017). This study, utilising recursive and self-annotated PST narratives to gather data, offers important insights into the role of motivation prior to and during the pre-service teacher education phase. The findings highlight the ways in which personal, contextual and extrinsic forces can influence the motivation to teach, over time. The research reveals that while pre-service secondary English teachers' initial intrinsic and altruistic motivations were sustained over time, these motivations were variously challenged,

strengthened, refined, or modulated in response to their ITE experiences, including their dialogic engagement with theory, peers, teachers, students and academics; professional in-school teaching experiences; and a number of unanticipated personal and situated factors.

### **Conceptualising teacher motivation**

A point of commonality in studies of secondary English teacher motivation (and teacher motivation more generally) is the conceptualisation and theorising of motivation in terms of its provenance: that is, identifying motivation according to its predominantly intrinsic, altruistic or extrinsic source (see De Cooman et al., 2007; Gore et al., 2016; Kyricou & Coulthard, 2000; Lortie, 1975/2002; Sinclair, 2008; Struyven & Vanthournout, 2014; Yee, 1990). Intrinsic motivations encompass an individual's:

- intellectual, emotional and even spiritual attachment to the inherent value of a subject as a “way of naming and framing the world” (Palmer, 1998, p. 25) and shaping one's identity;
- belief that teaching is a natural fit for their abilities, dispositions and personality traits (Bullough & Hall-Kenyon, 2011; Yee, 1990);
- internalised “epistemic assumptions” (Reid, 1996, p. 32) and core beliefs about the affordances of the subject and teaching, formed in part through their own schooling and the personal rewards they attribute to their schooling experiences; and
- a desire to maintain an ongoing engagement with the subject (see Davies, 1996; Heinz, 2015; Manuel & Brindley, 2006).

Altruistic motivation is often co-extensive and consonant with intrinsic motivation, although the former is more directed to horizons and ideations beyond the immediacy of the self. Lortie (1975/2002) saw this kind of motivation in terms of the “service” and “interpersonal” themes (pp. 27-32) that have strong historical associations with nineteenth century notions of “teaching as a special mission” (Lortie, 1975, p. 29). Altruistic motivation is often expressed as:

- the ambition to ‘make a difference’ by contributing to the betterment of individual lives and society more broadly (cf. Lortie, 1975/2002; Sinclair, 2008; Yee, 1990);
- enhancing social equity; and
- forging a life path centred on working with young people (Heinz, 2015; Manuel & Brindley, 2005; Reid & Caudwell, 1997; Richardson & Watt, 2006; Yee, 1990).

With some culturally-based exceptions (see Gao & Trent, 2009) extrinsic motivations are less dominant in individuals' reported reasons for choosing to teach. Extrinsic factors include:

- “material benefits” and “time compatibility” (Lortie, 1975/2002, p. 31),
- the portability or transferability of qualifications;
- working conditions, the status of the profession, and job security (Brookhart & Freeman, 1992; Bullough & Hall-Kenyon, 2011; Flores & Day, 2006; Goodwyn, 2012; Gore et al., 2016; Guerriero, 2015; Heinz, 2015; Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000; Lortie, 1975/2002; Manuel & Brindley, 2005; Manuel & Hughes, 2006).

Some research studies suggest that extrinsic motivations may assume more significance the longer a teacher has been in the profession (Heinz, 2015; Hellsten & Prytula, 2011). This hierarchy of intrinsic, altruistic and extrinsic motivations, however, has remained relatively stable in the findings of both large-scale quantitative cross-cultural studies (OECD, 2014; Richardson & Watt, 2006; Vieluf, Kaplan, Klieme, & Bayer, 2012; Watt & Richardson, 2008) and qualitative studies and with prospective, pre-service and early-career teachers across the range of secondary school subject specialisations (Gore et al., 2016; Guerriero, 2015; Heinz, 2015).

The present study draws on the established conceptualisation of motivation as intrinsic, altruistic and extrinsic (Gore et al., 2016; Guerriero, 2015; Heinz, 2015), and understands motivation as fluid and context-contingent. In order to theorise the potential fluctuations and shifts in motivation, the study utilises the theoretical framework developed by Day et al. (2006) in the VITAE project in conjunction with Yee's typology of teachers to interpret the factors and conditions that may influence teacher motivation over time. This theoretical framework will be further explicated in the discussion of the methodology that follows.

## **The study**

### ***Aim and purpose***

The aim of the study was to gather data on secondary English teachers' perspectives on their working lives including their: beliefs, values, motivations and aspirations; workload; work satisfaction; perceived self-efficacy; levels of wellbeing; views on current curricula and policy reforms; and career intentions. The focus of this paper is teacher motivation. The purpose of gathering teachers' perspectives on their motivation was two-fold:



- to further understand in-service teacher motivation in relation to initial motivation and the factors may enable or impede teachers' motivation to persist in teaching; and
- to contribute additional evidence to current research, theory and policy debates about teacher recruitment, retention and attrition.

### ***Research design***

Research questions were generated and then refined from a critical review of the relevant literature. The synthesis of elements of suitable methodologies and findings from validated prior research instruments informed the initial development of the questionnaire protocol for the study. Consistent with our ontological and epistemological preferences, we sought to collect data “with strong potential for revealing complexity ... [with] ‘thick descriptions’ ... that are vivid, nested in a real context, and have a ring of truth that has a strong impact on the reader” (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014, p. 11). The intention to “understand rather than reduce complexity” (Day et al., 2006, p. 11) led to the development of a conceptual framework and the application of methods that allowed for an inductive, iterative and recursive process of making meaning from the data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

### **Methodology**

Guiding the research design was an interpretivist paradigm based on constructivist-subjectivist presuppositions (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). This paradigm embraces the concept of multiple realities that are made and remade through subjective, language-based, context-bound and temporal constructions of meaning. Since the study is located in the tradition of phenomenological research, we were therefore concerned with representing the multiple realities of participants through the inclusion of the voices of the teachers themselves communicated through written responses (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

### ***Theoretical and conceptual framework***

In designing the study, we looked to the theoretical and conceptual framework developed by Day et al. (2006) in the *Variations in Teachers' Work, Lives and Effectiveness* – VITAE – project. The study found that a teachers' effectiveness and commitment was enabled or hindered by three dimensions of their work: professional, situated and personal (p. xiii). The first of these dimensions is the *professional* dimension which encompasses: the influence of external systems; social and policy expectations of the ‘quality teacher’; a teacher's ideals, values and motivations; and professional life phases. The professional dimension “is open to the influence of long term policy and social trends as to what constitutes a good teacher” (Day et al., 2006, p. 147). The

second – *situated* – dimension includes the myriad of context-specific and inter-relational factors affecting a teacher’s work such as, for example: students, student behaviour; school socio-economic factors; workload and working conditions; levels of support, including systemic support manifested locally; and the nature and quality of leadership and collegial relationships. The third dimension is the *personal* that comprises life outside of school, family and social roles, life events and circumstances, and individual personality (Day et al., 2006; Day, 2017).

According to this model, “teachers’ capacities to manage their professional lives and identities are mediated positively or negatively” (Day et al., 2006, p. 20) by the dynamic interplay of these three dimensions and by the extent to which the dimensions are in balance or, alternatively, out of balance at a particular time due to the predominance of or tensions between one or more of the dimensions (p. 20). For the purposes of the study of secondary English teachers’ motivation, the VITAE model thus provided an appropriate theoretical and conceptual basis to inform the research design and data analysis. The theoretical and conceptual framework of the VITAE study was then supplemented by the use of Yee’s (1990) typology of “good-fit” and “weak-fit” teachers as an additional discursive lens to bring to the interpretation of the data.

To date, neither the VITAE model (2006) or Yee’s typology have been utilised in research (separately or in combination) with secondary English teachers. The present study therefore potentially extends the theoretical understandings of teacher motivation in a discipline-specific context.

## **Methods**

### ***Data collection***

The initial phase of the study involved the development of a questionnaire containing 28 items. During 2017, secondary English teachers in New South Wales (NSW), Australia, were invited to participate in the study on a voluntary, anonymous basis by completing the online structured questionnaire accessed through the state English Teachers’ Association closed social media group. Participants in the study represent a non-random, convenience sample (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011).

The first nine items of the questionnaire sought demographic and profiling information about the participant’s gender, age, length of service, current role, school location, employment status, subjects taught and highest qualification. The remainder of the questionnaire contained items

organised according to broad themes derived from the model of teachers' work theorised by Day et al. (2006):

1. Self-efficacy, agency, motivation, professional beliefs and values.
2. Workload and working conditions.
3. Curriculum reforms, policy changes and regulatory requirements.
4. Wellbeing, satisfaction with teaching, and career intentions.

Half of the total remaining items were multiple choice questions that allowed for internal multiple responses. Most of these question types were based on a Likert rating scale, with the option of 'other' responses and an open field for comment. The other half of the items were open-ended questions or statements inviting written comments that were not word-limited. The collection of quantitative and qualitative data was considered to be productive for the exploratory, inductive nature of the research, since "numbers and words are *both* needed if we are to understand the world" (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014, p. 42) of teachers' work motivation and the ways in which they make sense of their lived experiences. Phase Two of the study has been designed to build on Phase One by gathering further qualitative data through semi-structured interviews and focus groups. The findings of this second phase will be reported on separately, at a later date.

### ***Sample and participants***

In the research sample of 211 secondary school English teachers from 191 schools across NSW, 181 participants were female, 29 were male and one identified as gender fluid. Twenty-six percent of the participants can be categorised as early-career teachers with teaching experience of up to five years. Teachers with more than five years' teaching experience made up 70 percent of the sample. The average age of the group was 47 years, with an average length of time teaching of 18 years. Of the 211 participants:

- 64 percent were current classroom English teachers (85 percent full-time and 11 percent part-time) in a secondary school;
- 30 percent were current Heads of Department of English;
- 18 percent were from non-metropolitan schools;
- 2.8 percent were casual teachers;
- the remaining number of participants were either retired, or in school-based leadership, co-ordination or other executive roles; and

- 60 percent of the sample held a double degree, Honours, Masters or PhD.

Given the compulsory status of English in the curriculum in NSW – from Kindergarten to Year 12<sup>1</sup> – secondary English teachers constitute the largest cohort of secondary teaching specialists. They carry a significant responsibility for preparing *all* students for national and state-based literacy tests and high-stakes external examinations, particularly in the final year of schooling. In this regard, the unique scope of their responsibility means they may experience the pressures of performativity (Ball, 2003) and accountability expectations in more intense and persistent ways that may, in turn, influence their views of teaching.

### ***Data analysis***

In keeping with the research design, theoretical and conceptual framework, and methodology, qualitative data in the form of participants' written comments were analysed inductively, iteratively and recursively. An average of more than two-thirds of participants provided written comments in questions containing an open field, and some of these comments were extensive. The volume of written responses can be taken as an indicator of teachers' engagement with the issues raised in the questionnaire and their interest in voicing their perspectives.

The initial coding and preliminary semiotic analysis of responses from teachers evinced a number of themes and sub-themes (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014, p. 10). Hermeneutic textual analysis of written responses enabled a multiplicity of 'readings' and the subsequent identification of categories and sub-categories, and some patterns of meaning emerging from teachers' situated perspectives (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). When the coding, analysis and interpretation were conducted on each item with an open field, a range of written comments in each category and sub-category was selected as illustrative of the emerging themes. Responses to quantitative items in the questionnaire were analysed for general trends and descriptive participant profile information. Where appropriate, quantitative results are provided in order to indicate the proportion of teachers who chose to provide written comments.

### **Findings**

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<sup>1</sup> Kindergarten is the equivalent of Foundation or the first year of primary school. Year 12 is the equivalent of the final year of secondary school.

The following sections focus on the responses of participants to questionnaire items designed to elicit data on: initial motivations to enter teaching; current levels of motivation; factors perceived to influence motivation; and career intentions.

### **Motivations to enter teaching**

Item 13 in the questionnaire asked participants to rate the motivational factors that influenced their initial decision to become a teacher, specialising in secondary English. The question listed 13 statements about motivation and included an open field of 'other' for those whose motivation was not – or not adequately – identified. The statements were a randomly listed combination of intrinsic, altruistic and extrinsic factors. Each statement was rated on a scale from 'very important', 'important', 'somewhat important', 'not sure', and 'not important'. All statements required a rated response. The motivational factors rated as 'very important' and 'important' are shown in descending order in columns A and B in Table 1 below. Combined totals of the number of teachers rating statements as 'very important' and 'important' are given in column C. The item was completed by 184 teachers.

Table 1: Factors influencing the decision to teach, rated as 'very important' and 'important'

<b>Factor influencing the initial decision to teach: (I)= Intrinsic (A) = Altruistic (E) = Extrinsic</b>	<b>Column A: Number of 'very important' ratings (n=184)</b>	<b>Column B: Number of 'important' ratings (n=184)</b>	<b>Column C: Combined 'very important' and 'important' ratings (n=184)</b>
Love of literature (I)	133	40	173
Making a difference in people's lives (A)	128	47	175
Love of English as a subject (I)	125	40	165
Love of a wide range of texts (I)	125	44	169
Working with young people (A)	105	61	166
Personal goal/dream (I)	57	71	138
Address issues of social and other disadvantage (A)	54	57	111
Quality of professional life (I/A)	31	72	103
Collaborating with colleagues (I/A)	30	63	93
Further career opportunities in the teaching profession (E)	22	45	67
Looking for a career change (E)	15	24	39

Portability of degree and skills for other kinds of work (E)	13	40	53
Salary and working conditions (E)	11	44	55

The five motivations rated as ‘very important’ by more than 100 teachers are intrinsic and altruistic. The ratings were consistent across categories of gender, employment status and location. Slightly more teachers with greater than 10 years of teaching experience rated a “love of literature” and a “love of English as a subject” as ‘very important’. Both intrinsic and altruistic factors are intermingled in the top-rated motivations, reinforcing the view that the decision to teach is typically driven by an individual’s subjectivities, values and beliefs coupled with “a distinctive and deep service ethic” (Bullough & Hall-Kenyon, 2011, p. 128). The high rating of the intentions of “making a difference in people’s lives” and “addressing issues of social and other disadvantage” signals the enduring cogency of the interpersonal, service, and social justice themes (Lortie, 1975/2002, pp. 27-32) and the “good-fit” (Yee, 1990) characteristics of teachers in the study.

Intrinsic motivations that cohere around teachers’ affective and intellectual attachment to the disciplinary norms of English as a subject are clearly prominent. Notably, when the ratings of ‘very important’ and ‘important’ are combined, the altruistic motivation of “making a difference in people’s lives” marginally outweighs the intrinsic “love of literature”. These findings correspond with those of previous studies of secondary English teachers’ initial teacher motivation (Dutton, 2017; Goodwyn, 2004, 2012; Manuel & Brindley, 2005).

Also consistent with the evidence from similar Australian and international studies, extrinsic factors – such as, for instance, material rewards, working conditions and qualification portability – were ranked as the least important set of initial motivations to teach (Goodwyn, 2004, 2012; Guerriero, 2015; Heinz, 2015; Manuel, 2003; Richardson & Watt, 2006; Watt & Richardson, 2012). Although teachers reported extrinsic motivations as less influential in their *initial* decision to teach, some more experienced teachers provided written comments in a later item about their ‘naivety’ in not adequately considering certain extrinsic factors such as salary and working conditions when they originally chose to teach.

Many decades ago, Lortie recognised that teachers who enter the profession may initially “underplay the role of material rewards as a result of normative pressures, which require teachers to emphasise more their dedication and service role” (1975/2002, p. 30). Such normative pressures have a deep historical and culturally-contingent source: teaching is

typically constructed as a giving, “knowing and caring profession” (Delors et al., 1996, p. 4), attracting people who are assumed to be driven by altruism, a willingness to make sacrifices, and elevated ideals that do not easily tally with more material, financial and self-interested motivations. This constructed paradigm of teaching as a service-oriented profession can, however, militate against teachers’ prioritising of extrinsic motivational factors: a pattern repeatedly reflected in the research literature on the ‘pull’ factors of teaching. It is a pattern that can also function to morally and ethically constrain teachers in demanding greater material benefits and improved working conditions (Lortie, 1975/2002).

Further reinforcing the minimal influence of extrinsic factors in the initial decision to teach, the following table presents the number of teachers who rated each motivation as ‘not important’.

**Table 2: Factors influencing the decision to teach, rated as ‘not important’**

<b>Factor influencing the initial decision to teach: I = Intrinsic A = Altruistic E = Extrinsic</b>	<b>Column A: Number of responses rated as ‘not important’ (n=184)</b>
Looking for a career change	121
Portability of degree and skills for other kinds of work	79
Salary and working conditions	49
Further career opportunities in the teaching profession	47
Collaborating with colleagues	22
Quality of professional life	21
Address issues of social and other disadvantage	17
Personal goal/dream	12
Making a difference in people's lives	3
Love of a wide range of texts	2
Love of literature	1
Love of English as a subject	0
Working with young people	0

While these responses are not unexpected, they tend to suggest that for a majority in this sample, teaching was not a ‘fall-back’ career or a change of career. The number of teachers indicating that the “portability of degree and skills for other kinds of work” was ‘not important’

also hints at the initial ideation of teaching as a longer-term career, with little consideration given at the time to the utility of qualifications for future types of employment. No teacher regarded a “love of English as a subject” and “working with young people” as ‘not important’, further illustrating the powerful and catalytic sway of these twin motivations to teach. The dominant status of intrinsic and altruistic motivation also implies an expectation of a certain level of autonomy, agency and intellectual authority together with the central focus on students and their learning. Teachers do not typically report that they are attracted to teaching because it offers them a career in administration, compliance and data management.

### **The current status and relevance of initial motivations to teach**

Item 14 in the questionnaire asked teachers about the extent to which their initial motivation to teach had been maintained. They responded with ‘strongly agree’, ‘agree’, ‘not sure’, ‘disagree’ or ‘strongly disagree’ to the statement: “I have maintained my original motivations that led me to choose teaching as a career”. A total of 184 participants completed this item, with 110 adding written comments that elaborated the reasons for their response. Two main categories of responses emerged from the written comments: teachers who have maintained their original motivations to teach; and those who have not. Within these broad categories, a number of sub-categories were apparent.

#### ***Teachers who have maintained their original motivations to teach***

A strong majority of teachers (74 percent) reported that they ‘strongly agreed’ (59 teachers) or ‘agreed’ (74 teachers) that they had maintained their original motivations. An analysis of 51 positive written comments from teachers within this category revealed two main sub-categories:

- a. Teachers whose initial motivation had been maintained or strengthened.
- b. Teachers who had held on to their initial motivation, but qualified their response by identifying risks and challenges to its durability.

#### ***a. Initial motivation maintained***

Of the 110 teachers who provided a written response to this item, 23 teachers supported their agreement by expressing the resilience of their love of literature, the subject, and in each case, the inter-relational dimensions of working with students. Teachers who affirmed their



motivations were from diverse professional life phases (Day et al., 2006). A beginning teacher, for example, offered a pithy summation of her intrinsic and altruistic motivations, underpinned by a clear epistemology and moral purpose:

I enjoy learning with students and believe in life-long learning. I am new to the profession in a new and developing school. I believe in education and self-efficacy, individual strengths and constructive feedback. I believe relationships are the key to teaching and I hope I can guide the students I work with to find and know their strengths to be active participants in our community (F, 1).

Highly invested teachers, with more than 20 years' experience, articulated their views in discourse capturing the vitality of their affectively-driven commitment to the subject, students and student learning: "I am still passionate about literature and learning and thinking, and hope to pass that on to students" (F, 26); "I am passionate about what I am doing and most importantly enjoy teaching young people" (F, 28); "I love teaching and watching students delight in their growing abilities" (F, 40); and "I have not lost the love of teaching wonderful texts and watching those light bulb moments when students 'get it' (F, 35). The synthesis of intrinsic and altruistic motivation was lucidly conveyed by a long-term teacher who stated that:

Teaching English is never ever boring. It is a constant of love the beauty of language with which I hope to inspire as many students as possible. Regardless of perceptions about kids not being "smart enough" to do a course I always encourage students to strive – to open their hearts to the truth in so many stories, ideas and the power of words which lie in the crevices of life (F, 30+).

For these teachers, their motivation has been sustained by passion, love, enjoyment, hope and for many, the implicit sense of self-efficacy and agency in inspiring, witnessing and contributing to students' growth. Teachers in this sub-category can be characterised in terms of what Yee (1990) described as "good-fit stayers" (p. 109): they exhibited "positive attitudes to their work" and were "more apt to say such things as 'I love my students' or 'the kids are great' and to view their students as a source of fun, stimulation, and appreciation" (p. 95).

The affirmations here also underscore the powerful role of emotions in teaching (Hargreaves, 1998, p. 316): in these examples, positive and generative emotions nourish the teacher's professional identity and foster what Hargreaves (1998) termed "discretionary commitment" (p. 315). This kind of commitment

is found where teachers are positively engaged with their work. It is a predominantly emotional phenomenon in terms of the passion that teachers have for their work and in terms of the importance they attach to establishing and developing emotional bonds with students, parents and one another as a basis for teaching and learning (p. 315).

A small number of teachers reported that their motivation had increased over the duration of their career: "It has increased as I have been exposed to certain populations. For example, in my studies on both gifted students and special needs students" (F, 10+). One experienced teacher wrote that her initial altruistic motivation

has become much more important. 40 years ago I didn't know anything about social disadvantage or the significance of collaboration. I loved English and history and teaching was a good career once you had kids. It is a vocation for me. I love it and I know it's what I'm meant to be doing (F, 33).

This teacher was one of a number who used the term 'vocation' or 'calling' in their comments, and in this instance, drew attention to the longevity of her commitment, her stable professional identity, and her enduring personal and professional fulfilment.

Some teachers offered insights into the enabling *professional*, *situated* and *personal* (Day et al., 2006) factors sustaining their motivation: "I have been fortunate to work in an intellectually stimulating environment with a diverse range of students – because this environment has been supportive, I feel that I have been able to live up to my goals" (F, 10). Similarly, other teachers attributed their sustained intrinsic and altruistic motivation to productive collegial relationships; the quality of leadership; and a sense of purpose, meaning and agency in pursuing a larger, shared educational vision:

I have worked with supportive and caring staff who have a strong vision. The schools also had strong vision and leadership that

supported teachers. I have weathered the highs and lows of teaching because of these and the feeling that I am making a difference in the lives of some of my students (F, 30+).

Based on their research with 300 teachers in the VITAE project, Day et al. (2006) constructed four 'Scenarios' (p. xiii) that were "identified by the degree of dominance" that each of the "professional, situated and personal dimensions" of their work "had on aspects of a teacher's life at a given time" (p. 150):

1. dimensions in relative balance (for over a third of teachers in the study);
2. one dominant dimension (for more than 44 percent of teachers in the study);
3. two dominant dimensions, impacting on the third dimension (for more 15 percent of teachers in the study); and
4. three conflicting dimensions (for 6 percent of teachers in the study) (p. 153).

Teachers experiencing Scenarios 2, 3 and 4 were found to be most at risk in terms of their commitment, motivation, resilience and wellbeing (p. xiii). In the present study, the teachers reporting that they had maintained their original motivations to teach can be described in terms of Scenario 1: the three dimensions of their work appear to be in 'relative balance'. The most frequently cited reasons for the durability of intrinsic and altruistic motivation for this group were favourable *professional* and *situated* dimensions (a supportive collegial environment, effective leadership, intellectual reward, and students).

#### **b. Initial motivation sustained but tested**

The second sub-category of positive responses (28 teachers) diverged from those in the first sub-category in that they qualified the status of initial motivation by identifying actual and potential de-motivating factors:

These [motivations] have never faltered. I have always believed that teaching is a wonderful responsibility but I have to fight disillusionment every day and remind myself why I became a teacher and what my core business is (F, 40).

I've always wanted to help people and to share my love of learning. I have several times considered leaving the profession due to the extremely heavy workload, additional administration and other non-teaching hours,

and the bureaucracy of the system, however I had stayed in the job due to my original passion and determination (F, 8).

In both comments there is tacit evidence of the resilience of the teacher's personal values, passion and idealism that remediate the negative professional and situated forces they have encountered. Along similar lines, a number of teachers agreed that their initial motivation had prevailed despite being tested by, for example, "the level of administration work and increasing workload" (F, 3). The recurrent theme in comments from teachers in this sub-category was the impact of perceived adverse contextual forces on maintaining their level of motivation:

Maintaining motivation about teaching has been difficult. I still love teaching teenagers and enjoy my subject; however, I do feel overwhelmed. My work-life balance is terrible. I let my own children down all the time and often prioritise my students. I have become cynical about examinations and structures, believing that it is impossible to teach well in our current policy-driven environment (F, 25).

Despite the realisation that my time to be an inspiring and dedicated teacher is consistently overtaken by my completion of administration, I still love it and have high expectations of myself and my colleagues to be wonderful teachers who make a difference (F, 7).

The changing nature of the job makes me constantly reconsider why I'm still doing it. The opportunity to bring a love of literature and the world to kids still exists, but I feel that external factors are making it harder and harder (F, 10+).

When I am teaching Shakespeare or poetry or film and am immersed in that, engaging students – I love teaching. I really love it. When I am dragging them through HSC essay prep and NAPLAN prep, when I am implementing yet another literacy-focus or skills homework program, I am drained and unhappy. The kids hate it and I hate it, and we get stuck in this unhappy cycle (F, 10+).

Each of these perspectives discloses a tension between the desire to sustain their professional identity – shaped by their initial motivation – and the need to manage *situated* or external factors that have challenged this professional identity, including their “love” of teaching. The “good-fit” teachers in this sub-category are therefore potentially at risk of becoming “good-fit undecided” or “good-fit leavers” (Yee, 1990). A number of “good-fit” teachers pinpointed the extrinsic factors of salary and working conditions as significant dampening influences on their motivation:

Most [motivations] have stayed the same but salary and working conditions and working with colleagues mean more to me now than the naive 21 yr old me! (F, 10+).

I think I was naive to not consider salary and working conditions. Working as an English teacher certainly affects your whole life. It is a life style that requires you to work on weekends otherwise you simply wouldn't get the job done. I was not aware of this when I began teaching. And over the years it's just something you do. You love the job and your students. But it shouldn't be this way (F, 10+).

The experiences of teachers in this sub-category can be understood in terms of Scenarios 2 and 3 (Day et al., 2006): in the former, one dimension of their work (negative *professional* or *situated* factors) dominates, impacting on the other two; and in the latter Scenario, two dimensions dominate (negative *professional* and *situated* factors), impacting on the third, *personal* dimension. Day et al. (2006) described teachers in these Scenarios as managing influences “which sometimes threaten to de-stabilise their positive identities, commitment and capacity to be effective, pursue their original call to teach and sustain commitment in the profession” (p. xx).

### ***Teachers who have not maintained their original motivations to teach***

Of the 184 teachers who responded to the statement that they had maintained their initial motivation, 16 reported that they were ‘not sure’; 25 ‘disagreed’; and 10 ‘strongly disagreed’. Taken together, these responses suggest that more than one-quarter of teachers in the sample were either uncertain about having maintained their initial motivation or felt that their initial motivation had all but disappeared: “It has been beaten

out of me. Too many cynical cost-cutting management choices by Department of Education over the years" (M, 10+).

One teacher encapsulated a number of the key themes evident in comments about waning motivation – also identified by others – when she wrote that:

Teachers seem to be seen as the ones who are responsible for curing society's ills ... We are time poor, overwhelmed by the external pressures attached to our roles, and are frustrated by the lack of resources, lack of support from parents in general, many of whom do not value education at all, as well as the erosion of our status in society. The money doesn't matter. Most teachers just want to feel respected for their efforts in trying to make differences in their students' lives. (F)

The cataloguing of negative *professional* and *situated* factors here highlights the role of socio-cultural/policy influences – such as declining respect for and valuing of teachers' work and at the same time, increasing expectations – as causal factors in eroding the motivation to teach.

A conspicuous but not unexpected feature of many comments in this category was the expression of what Hargreaves (1998) termed the "emotional labour" (p. 319) of teaching. Almost three decades ago, he warned of the damaging consequences of ignoring the emotions of teaching:

it is exceptionally important to acknowledge and honour the emotions of teaching ... and to cultivate their active development as an essential aspect of developing higher quality in education. If we ignore the emotions of education, we not only miss this opportunity but we also allow emotion to enter the world of teaching and leading by the back door, in damaging ways, when hyper-rational policies and initiatives alienate, anger, frustrate or sadden those who are obliged to implement them (p. 316).

Teachers who reported that their initial motivation had not been maintained described the emotions of alienation, disenchantment, anger, frustration, and sadness that Hargreaves predicted: "I still love it [teaching] but the admin and expectations make me sad" (F, 33). Others

also revealed the extent to which the emotions of hope, optimism and desire that characterised their initial motivation had not been “honoured”:

I no longer feel I can make a difference. I no longer feel my passion and commitment to my subject areas, the way I conduct my professional life, or the depth of knowledge I can provide are valued or respected by my 'leaders' (F, 30).

I love teaching but it is overwhelming and it has affected my mental health ... Every year the workload increases, the behaviour worsens and the support diminishes. I am giving myself another two years and then I think I'll be out. I love it ... I'm a smart professional who is successful at my job, and I deserve to be taken seriously and I deserve to be adequately compensated for my time (F, 4).

The dream and aspirations of teaching versus the reality differ greatly. Between juggling the ever-daunting administration duties in conjunction with the polymathic demands of the profession and the act of delivering and planning content, there is no time to breathe. We're drowning (M, 3).

However, despite the burden of externally-generated pressures, around half of the teachers in this category still expressed their reluctance to relinquish their attachment to students and student learning: “I stay because of the students, not the shifting climate” (F, 8); and from another, “... I'm dissatisfied with the external issues. I have considered leaving, but the kids keep me coming back” (F, 10+). These teachers’ perspectives accord with Yee’s category of “good-fit leavers” (1990): they disclosed a strong personal connection to classroom teaching and students, but their intrinsic and altruistic motivation had been impaired over time by adverse working conditions that had rendered precarious their professional identity and capacity to persist.

The responses of this group of teachers support the view of Schaefer et al. (2012) that the seeds of attrition are evident long before a teacher may actually resign. The range of comments intimate that teaching has become a site of struggle and instability, with each of the three dimensions of influence on the teacher’s identity in conflict. Day et al. (2006) described this as Scenario 4 in which teachers experience “fluctuations” that are “able/not able to be managed depending on the strength of support from internal and/or external factors” (p. 152).

The main negative sources of influence on teachers' reported levels of motivation resonate with findings in the research literature that have identified: workload and time pressures; the pace and volume of reform; excessive administration; poor working conditions; a lack of leadership and support; fatigue; reduced autonomy and agency; flagging levels of self-esteem; and inadequate recognition of the importance of the affective aspects of their work as risk markers for the decision to leave the profession (see Day, 2012, 2017; Day et al., 2006; Glazer, 2018; Heinz, 2015; Huberman, 1995; Kyriacou, 2000, 2001; Macdonald, 1999; Mason & Matas, 2015; Stoeber & Rennert, 2008; Weldon & Ingvarson, 2016; Yee, 1990). Since findings from previous studies have drawn attention to the link between declining levels of motivation and the risk of attrition outcomes (Guerriero, 2015; Heinz, 2015; Hellsten & Prytula, 2011; Yee, 1990), the questionnaire also invited participants to respond to a series of statements about their work satisfaction and career intentions.

### **Work satisfaction and career intentions**

Item 24 of the questionnaire asked teachers about their current level of satisfaction with their career. Of the 172 teachers who responded: 16 were 'very satisfied'; 64 were 'satisfied'; 17 were 'not sure'; 38 were 'unsatisfied'; and 6 were 'very unsatisfied'. Comments rather than a rating were provided by an additional 31 teachers. The proportion of teachers reporting their satisfaction with teaching aligns with the proportion of teachers who had earlier affirmed that their initial motivation to enter the profession had been maintained or had been maintained despite being tested. This category of "good-fit stayers" (Yee, 1990) were also the teachers who indicated that they intended to remain in the profession.

One quarter of teachers, however, conveyed that they were either 'very unsatisfied' or 'unsatisfied' with teaching. When this number is combined with those who expressed ambivalence (17 who were 'not sure'), the findings point to more than one third of the teachers who were either equivocal about or dissatisfied with their current role. The teachers who reported dissatisfaction were also those who were uncertain about their commitment or signalled their intention to leave the profession prematurely if viable alternatives for employment arose.

For some, financial obligations operated to restrict their choices for alternative employment: "[I stay] for financial reasons predominantly. I would love to go back to just teaching with paperwork in the background" (F, 10+); "If another job came up that paid the same money and



didn't drain my life ... I'd take it" (F, 10+); and "I'll stay until I can find other work" (F, 10+). Likewise, the limited employment options for older teachers and doubts about employability in other fields emerged as a strong theme in the comments: "I can't see what else I'll do" (F, 10+); "I just need to find a way out because, at my age, I feel I have no future in this job and it has not been for lack of trying to build a career over the last 28 years" (F, 28). In other words, a quarter to one third of the sample voiced perspectives consonant with those of "good-fit leavers" (Yee, 1990).

## **Synthesis of findings**

In line with previous studies of secondary English teacher initial motivation, the findings from this study reinforce the overwhelming influence of intrinsic and altruistic reasons for choosing to teach. Remarkably, the top-ranked motivations of "making a difference in people's lives", a "love of literature", and a "love of English as a subject" were identified as such by teachers across the "professional life phases" (Day et al., 2006, p. vi). The research sample included teachers with between one year and more than 40 years' of experience. This finding not only provides evidence of a cross-generational stability in the initial motivation to teach English: it also suggests a powerful "cycle of influence" (Manuel, 2003) at play whereby English teachers' work has a far-reaching ripple effect on the career choices of their students who, in turn, decide to teach English for the same reasons.

### ***Initial motivation maintained***

Based on the self-reported reasons for choosing to teach, all teachers who responded to this item (184) were a "good-fit" (Yee, 1990) for teaching. This finding may be explained by the non-random convenience sample: teachers who participated in the study were members of a subject-based professional association and therefore more likely to be invested in teaching and more likely to contribute their views to a research study seeing their views. However, when asked about the extent to which their initial motivation had been sustained, amplified, modified or diminished, and the implications of this, the responses revealed two main categories of teacher, and within the first category, two sub-categories. The categories and sub-categories differentiated teachers' "good-fit" status. In the second of these categories, a proportion of dissatisfied teachers, despite being a "good-fit" in terms of their initial motivations, saw the study as an opportunity to register their discontent and voice their concerns about the pressures they were experiencing.

The first category comprised more than 70 percent of the 184 teachers who responded to this question about maintaining their initial motivation. Within this category, there were two sub-categories:

- those who had maintained their initial motivation (“good-fit stayers”) and
- those whose initial motivation had been tested but had prevailed (“good-fit stayers” at risk of becoming “good-fit undecided” or “good-fit leavers”) (Yee, 1990).

Teachers in the first sub-category who provided comments about maintaining their initial motivation (23 teachers) commonly described this in terms of their affective experience – their love and passion for and enjoyment of teaching – and did so in a high-modality discourse that conveyed their sense of agency, self-efficacy and stable professional identity. A number of these teachers alluded to the professional and situated influences of strong collegial relationships; rewarding engagement with students; and fulfilment derived from an enduring intellectual connection with literature. Teachers in this category reported high levels of satisfaction with teaching and their intention to remain in the profession. Interestingly, a majority of teachers in this category were middle and later career teachers with more than 10 years of service.

A small number of teachers (3) in this first sub-category reported that their initial motivation had increased over the course of their career. These teachers were in the later professional career phase. Their written comments captured a *joie de vivre* suggesting the resilience of their individual attributes coupled with positive contextual factors that served to nourish and support their professional identity, values and beliefs. Lindqvist and Nordanger (2016) propose that “a professional career can ... be seen as a process in which individual choices are the results of the interaction between individual dispositions and the social, cultural and economic context over time” (p. 90). Similar to that developed by Day et al. (2006) in the VITAE study, this theory resists the assumption that motivation and commitment are attributable to *either* personal *or* contextual variables. Instead, motivation and commitment are conceptualised as part of a teacher’s “identity-making process in which individual and contextual factors are integrated and negotiated” (Lindqvist & Nordanger, 2016 p. 90).

In the second sub-category, 28 teachers elaborated on the status of their initial motivation by identifying how it had been challenged. Almost universally, teachers in this group described the external pressures associated with increased administrative demands and workload; performance and accountability structures; and heightened expectations as the negative sources of influence on their motivation. Despite these contextual threats and periods of

fluctuating motivation levels, each worked to maintain their original motivation and professional identity and registered their intention to continue to teach.

### ***Initial motivation not maintained***

The second main category included more than one quarter of teachers who had not maintained their original motivation. The most commonly cited reasons for declining motivation were *professional* and *situated* factors associated with “changes in teachers’ working conditions, workload and roles caused by the demands of new public management and policy-led reforms that challenge traditional notions of teacher professionalism” (Day & Hong, 2016, p. 115). These teachers described the de-motivating impact of negative *professional* and *situated* factors such as:

- disillusionment with ‘systems’, and a diminished sense of agency and authority due to institutional, curricular and policy reforms, including the pace and volume of change;
- salary and working conditions that do not compensate adequately for the workload and expectations of teachers;
- the “emotional labour” (Hargreaves, 1998, p. 319) of their work; and
- a lack of respect for and support and acknowledgement of the teacher as a professional.

Responses from teachers in this category revealed an association between impaired motivation, low levels of work satisfaction and the intention of leaving the profession prematurely. They frequently articulated a compromised sense of authority, disempowerment and disenchantment. There was strong evidence, however, that teachers’ commitment to their students was the single most influential factor in remediating or staving off attrition outcomes for those teachers who reported the highest levels of dissatisfaction with and ambivalence about their career.

### **Concluding thoughts**

The teachers’ perspectives reported here support and extend Australian and international research studies that posit a relationship between the durability of initial motivation, work satisfaction, and the intention to continue to teach (see Day & Gu, 2010, 2014; Heinz, 2015; Hellsten & Prytula, 2011; Huberman, 1995; Schlichte, Yssel & Merbler, 2005). Because the teachers in this study represent a convenience sample from members of a professional English teachers’ association, the findings are not generalisable to a wider English teacher population that includes those who are not members of a professional association. The research does,

however, contribute to existing understandings of the complex nature of in-service secondary English teacher motivation and the implications for teacher professional identity, retention and attrition.

Although limited in its scope, the study reinforces the need for further research with in-service teachers that is longitudinal both within and also across the subject areas, in order to inform and reorient policy to address the contextual and systemic forces that can jeopardise a significant number of experienced “good-fit” (Yee, 1990) teachers’ continued investment in the profession. In addition, it is necessary to conduct further research into the durability of initial motivation across the “professional life phases” (Day et al., 2006) to more fully understand its role in relation to “why some teachers remain committed ... why others do not, why some teachers stay, and why others leave” (Day, 2017, p. 62).

The hegemonic discourses inscribed in current policy, accountability and regulatory frameworks of quality teaching and professional standards assume that quality teachers are determinant in students’ motivation, engagement, learning, and achievement (see AITSL, 2012, 2016, 2017). The plethora of documentation associated with these policies and frameworks, however, is silent on matters of teacher motivation. Instead they are often driven by the assumption that quality teaching is synonymous with the *personal* qualities of the teacher that exist in isolation from the *professional* and *situated* dimensions of their work. Yet teachers in this study consistently identified negative *professional* and *situated* factors as the main source of tension and challenge to their *personal* commitment.

There seems to be scant recognition that individuals are attracted to teaching for reasons that have little if anything to do with a desire to be administrators or to have their expertise standardised, regulated and persistently measured. Likewise, there is little formalised acknowledgement that “the dream and aspirations of teaching” (M, 3) are driven by affective intrinsic and altruistic motivations that not only attract individuals to teach, but also, if recognised, valued and fostered, can potentially sustain their commitment to teaching well beyond the early-career phase. The goals of quality teaching, teacher retention and raising all students’ educational achievement form part of why individuals choose to teach. Addressing these worthy goals requires government policies to “honour the deepest values of teachers and speak to their greatest strengths as people responsible for caring for the young” (Bullough & Hall-Kenyon, 2011, p. 137) – and to do so by respecting and hearing the wisdom of teachers’ voices.

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